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DE RUEHSG #1070/01 3132013
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 092012Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0240
INFO RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0143
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0139
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0081
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 001070

SIPDIS
STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: Santiago Nov. 9 Media Report

Lead Story

¶1. The national scholastic test for fourth graders shows that only 24% have the level of language skills required for that grade. The test also confirms that the gap that exists between private and public education remains unchanged; only 12% of low-income school students achieved advanced level skills (Conservative, independent La Tercera, 11/9).

U.S.-Related News

¶2. Sources in Santiago said there are "talks" underway with the United States for a "possible" meeting between Presidents Bachelet and Obama at APEC to discuss, among other things, the difficult situation in Honduras. Bachelet will meet at APEC with Chinese President Hu Jintao (Conservative, influential El Mercurio, 11/9).

¶3. Arturo Valenzuela was confirmed Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. His appointment is of special importance given the absence of a special envoy to the region (El Mercurio, 11/7).

¶4. Editorial: "Chile's forestry sector has gone through some rough times because of the subsidy that U.S. cellulose producers receive.... It is evident that this subsidy is hurting forestry companies in Chile and in other countries.... On Tuesday, Chile's Foreign Ministry will submit its complaint regarding the subsidy to the Chile-U.S Free Trade Agreement Administration on behalf of local forestry companies. This is important, because regardless of the outcome, it will clearly set Chile's position on a situation that affects commercial relations between the two countries" (El Mercurio, 11/9).

¶5. Editorial: "The House approved the health reform by a small difference.... This victory is good for the president... because in the eyes of the average American he has moved slowly in

the yet inaugural stage of his office.... This disenchantment ... exists abroad too, where there is the growing perception that the president is having a hard time dismantling the interventionist, unilateral, and adversarial structure set up by his predecessor "(Government-owned La Nacion, 11/9).

¶6. Editorial: "President Obama will have to carefully weigh the emotional effect of Fort Hood before escalating the conflict in Afghanistan. This won't be easy, because the memories of Vietnam have been lingering for some time. Fort Hood has brought back for some the worst fear, which is that U.S. society is trapped in a war without destiny and that is taking the lives of young promising individuals for motives that are not fully understood" (Conservative, influential newspaper-of-record El Mercurio, 11/9).

U.S.-Brazil

¶7. In the Communist Party's Congress in Brazil, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva referred to the Colombia-U.S. military agreement: "Dear comrade Obama, we don't need U.S. bases in Colombia to fight narcotics trafficking in South America. We will take care of South America and our borders and you look after your consumers. The world will be better this way" (La Tercera, 11/8).

U.S.-China

¶8. China's authorization for Disney to build a theme park in Shanghai is timely considering President Obama's upcoming visit to China. Both countries have strong differences and very conservative sectors in Washington believe that it is just a matter of time before the two enter a Cold War, especially given China's recent military growth. The U.S. President wants to strengthen ties with Beijing and will most likely seek a constructive relationship with President Jintao (El Mercurio, 11/9).

Marriott Hotel Bombing

¶9. Police stains, churches, banks, embassies, and hotels have been targets of explosive devices since 2004. On Tuesday one device detonated outside the Marriott Hotel. It was the 14th this year and the 102nd since 2004. The Public Ministry has requested the FBI's cooperation in the investigation of these attacks, particularly with regard to their manufacturing and its information on anarchist organizations worldwide. The FBI, on the other hand, has inquired about trends of these types of bombings in Chile. In the framework of this cooperation, prosecutors, and police officers traveled in March to FBI headquarters in the United States to train in the investigation of explosive devices. In 2001, the FBI also assisted with the investigation of the "letter bombs" received by the U.S. Embassy in Santiago. Embassy sources said that this type of cooperation occurs every time there is a request for it (La Tercera, 11/8).

¶10. 15 members of the U.S. Special Forces were staying at the Marriott Hotel where the bomb detonated last week. They had been participating in the "Southern Star" military exercise with soldiers from Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay and decided to go a few days after the exercise concluded. Local prosecutors immediately began looking into the possibility that this was a directed and planned attack, but it soon became evident that it was a coincidence. One reason is that the device was placed in a bathroom and not in a conference room or on the floor where the foreigners were staying. The second is that the statement issued by the anarchist organization that claimed responsibility did not mention the intent of attacking foreigners or U.S. interests (El Mercurio, 11/8).

Local

¶11. President Bachelet named General Juan Miguel Fuente-Alba Army Commander-in-Chief. Fuente-Alba will take office in March 2010. But human rights organizations are questioning the general's appointment because of his alleged presence in Calama in 1973 when the so-called "Death Caravan" arrived in that town. Fuente-Alba has testified twice that at the time he had been assigned to another town. Government spokesperson Carolina Toha said on Friday that the judge investigations the case had "completely ruled out" the general's participation in human rights violations ((El Mercurio 11/7, 11/8; La Tercera, 11/8).

Poll

¶12. El Mercurio-Opina September poll shows that Sebastian Pinera leads the presidential race with 38 percent in the cities of Santiago, Valparaiso, and Concepcion. Eduardo Frei and Marco Enriquez-Ominami received 21.5 and 20.4 percent respectively, which is a technical tie. In a runoff, Pinera would receive 41.9 percent of the votes and Enriquez-Ominami 37.7 percent; Pinera versus Frei, 42.7 and 36.8 percent respectively.

¶13. The election propaganda campaigns will start on Friday. This includes the television political spots (La Tercera, 11/8). Note: The television propaganda is aired in two 20 minute blocks every day from noon to 12:30 and from 10:40-11:00p.m. On weekends the second block is aired 8:40 to 9:00 p.m.

Indigenous Affairs

¶14. Police intelligence sources and regional prosecutors have records that the leaders of the radical Mapuche organization CAM trained in Colombia's FARC camps in the border with Ecuador from 2004-2006. Their analysis also shows that since 2006, the CAM has changed its tactics and began attacking trucks, civilian vehicles, and began using high caliber weapons (El Mercurio 11/9).

Cultural

¶15. BB King, "The King of Blues," will perform in Santiago on March 27 at Teatro Caupolican (La Tercera, 11/7).
SIMONS